July 16, 2010

*TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Niagara Peninsula Rail Service Expansion Class
Environmental Assessment (EA) Study and Preliminary Design
ICP 42-2010(PWA 63-2010)

Regional Council, at its meeting of July 15, 2010, approved as amended the following recommendations of its Integrated Community Planning Committee:

That Regional Council pass a resolution supporting Metrolinx efforts to bring weekday commuter GO Rail service to Niagara Region;

That Regional Council endorse the station locations at Casablanca Boulevard in Grimsby, Ontario Street in Beamsville, VIA Rail Station in St. Catharines, and VIA Rail Station in Niagara Falls as selected by Metrolinx;

That Regional Council endorse the layover sites located at Glendale Avenue in St. Catharines, and VIA Station in Niagara Falls as selected by Metrolinx;

That Regional Council pass a resolution supporting the City of Niagara Falls position that the GO Rail service terminate at the Niagara Falls VIA Station using the existing Welland Canal crossing and that Metrolinx explore co-ordination with the Seaway Authority for train crossing on a priority basis;

That Regional Council pass a resolution requesting implementation of GO Rail Service to the St. Catharines VIA Station and the Niagara Falls VIA Station at the same time as GO Rail Service is implemented to the James Street North station in the City of Hamilton;

That Regional Council pass a resolution, requesting Metrolinx to investigate extending the GO Rail service through the international crossings at Niagara Falls and Fort Erie and explore connection to the Empire High Speed Rail Corridor in the United States;

That Regional Council pass a resolution requesting Metrolinx to explore the CP Rail Line for additional expansion program in future; and
That a copy of this report be circulated to the area municipalities, Metrolinx, **Federal and Provincial** Ministry of Transportation, **St. Lawrence Seaway** and the City of Hamilton.

Yours truly,

[Signature]

Kevin Bain
Regional Clerk

cc:  Mr. K. Brothers, Commissioner Public Works  
Mr. P. Robson, Commissioner Integrated Community Planning  
Mr. M. Roach, Manager, Public Works Financial Services  
M. Macara, Legal Services  
S. McPetrie, Administrative Assistant Integrated Community Planning  
*See distribution list attached below*
CIRCULATED TO:

1) Area Municipalities (electronically)

2) Metrolinx
   20 Bay Street, Suite 901
   Toronto, Ontario M5J 2N8

3) Ministry of Transportation
   Corporate Correspondence Unit
   Attention: Honourable Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Transportation
   3rd Floor, Ferguson Block
   77 Wellesley Street West
   Toronto, Ontario M7A 1Z8

4) Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities
   Attention: The Honourable John Baird, Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities
   Tower C - 330 Sparks Street
   Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
   K1A 0N5

5) Hamilton City Hall
   Attention: Clerks Division
   71 Main St. West
   Hamilton, ON
   L8P 4Y5

6) St. Lawrence Seaway
   Niagara Region
   508 Glendale Avenue
   St. Catharines, Ontario
   Canada L2R 6V8
THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA

REPORT TO: Chair and Members of the Public Works Committee
and
Chair and Members of the Integrated Community Planning Committee

SUBJECT: Niagara Peninsula Rail Service Expansion Class Environmental Assessment (EA) Study and Preliminary Design

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That this Committee recommends to Regional Council:

1. That Regional Council pass a resolution supporting Metrolinx efforts to bring weekday commuter GO Rail service to Niagara Region.

2. That Regional Council endorse the station locations at Casablanca Boulevard in Grimsby, Ontario Street in Beamsville, VIA Rail Station in St. Catharines, and VIA Rail Station in Niagara Falls as selected by Metrolinx.

3. That Regional Council endorse the layover sites located at Glendale Avenue in St. Catharines, and VIA Station in Niagara Falls as selected by Metrolinx.

4. That Regional Council pass a resolution supporting the City of Niagara Falls position that the GO Rail service terminate at the Niagara Falls VIA Station using the existing Welland Canal crossing and that Metrolinx explore co-ordination with the Seaway Authority for train crossing on a priority basis.

5. That Regional Council pass a resolution requesting implementation of GO Rail Service to the St. Catharines VIA Station and the Niagara Falls VIA Station at the same time as GO Rail Service is implemented to the James Street North station in the City of Hamilton.
6. That Regional Council pass a resolution, requesting Metrolinx to investigate extending the GO Rail service through the international crossings at Niagara Falls and Fort Erie and explore connection to the Empire High Speed Rail Corridor in the United States.

7. That Regional Council pass a resolution requesting Metrolinx to explore the CP Rail Line for additional expansion program in future.

8. That a copy of this report be circulated to the area municipalities, Metrolinx, Ministry of Transportation and the City of Hamilton.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the proposed GO Rail Service Expansion to Niagara by Metrolinx and summarizes responses from Niagara Region as a stakeholder. The main areas of consideration are the selection of route (CN Rail vs. CP Rail lines), alternative station locations and layover sites, and potential implementation options. The report endorses the Metrolinx selection of stations and layover sites in Niagara and requests Metrolinx to consider keeping the Niagara Falls VIA station as the Rail terminus in co-ordination with the Seaway Authority as a priority rail crossing, and extending the Rail service to Fort Erie. The report also suggests exploring the CP Rail Line for future rail service expansion to Niagara.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising out of this report. In the future, there could be direct or indirect financial involvement for the Region with GO Rail’s service expansion plan moving forward.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to submit a response from Niagara Region, as a stakeholder, on the GO Rail Niagara Peninsula Service Expansion Class Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Design Study currently underway for GO Transit, commuter rail service expansion to Niagara.

BACKGROUND

Niagara Region has been desirous of getting a GO Transit connection to enhance the inter-municipal/inter-regional travel for residents, students and visitors, and to boost
economic activities. The Niagara Regional Transportation Strategy (2002), Niagara Economic Development Corporation Economic Growth Strategy (2005-10), Council Business Plan (2007-11) and Niagara 2031 Growth Management Strategy (2009), all support the strategic direction of improved travel and commuting between Niagara and surrounding areas based on the objective of improved passenger services, integration of transit and improved railway facilities. Earlier in 2004, the Region conducted an Inter-Regional Rail, Bus and Ferry Passenger Services Study (IRRBFPS-2004) and is currently facilitating improvements to the inter-municipal transit services through a three phased study with the second phase currently in an advanced stage of completion.

The Metrolinx - Regional Transportation Plan ("The Big Move", November 2008) provides a vision, goals and objectives for seamless, coordinated, efficient, equitable and user-centered transportation within the GTHA in the future. GO 2020, the strategic plan for GO Transit service enhancements by year 2020, identifies future rail connections to Niagara.

GO Transit (Metrolinx) started GO Weekend Rail service to Niagara in May 2009 and was very successful in attracting riders. This was followed by GO Bus service to Niagara in September 2009. Infrastructure upgrades were also undertaken at the Casablanca Boulevard Park-and-Ride lot and at the VIA Rail station in Niagara Falls to support the expanded services.

In January 2009, GO Transit undertook a feasibility study to investigate rail service expansion to Niagara. Updates to the study were provided to Regional and local municipal staff during the study. The study recommended the preferred corridor (CN over CP) and also determined a number of suggested train stop locations and layover sites along the CN route. Subsequent to the completion of this study, GO Transit initiated an Environmental Assessment (EA) in November 2009. The first Public Information Centers (PICs) were held during January/February 2010 and the second PICs were held in May 2010.

The Need and Benefits of GO Rail Service to Niagara

GO Transit expansion to Niagara is a significant step towards enhanced inter-municipal/inter-regional travel and will be a catalyst for growth of economic activities within the Region. During the inaugural year 2009 season, GO weekend rail service was utilized by approximately 50,000 passengers, greatly exceeding ridership estimates. GO bus services, started in September 2009, have provided an alternative, convenient, and cost-effective means of commuting to the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA) and will help build ridership in advance of GO Rail service implementation.

The proposed rail service expansion is anticipated to change commuting patterns with increased transit ridership, better utilization of active transportation modes and effective implementation of future Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures. Train services will benefit both Niagara and GTHA residents with enhanced access to
business, employment and educational institutions. The rail service will also help in the growth of local businesses by way of increased tourist traffic.

GO Transit forms an important part of Niagara Region's vision for integrated regional transportation, as the Region is trying to facilitate improvements towards inter-municipal transit services in a staged manner. The Inter-Municipal Transit study outlined three service concepts including the Triangle Service (connecting the three major urban centers of Niagara), Second Tier Feeder Service (connecting Fort Erie, Port Colborne and Niagara-On-the-Lake to the Triangle Services), and Rural Demand Responsive Services (connecting the rural areas to the Feeders and the Triangle Services). These are shown in a concept map attached as Appendix 1 which also depicts GO Transit as an integral part of the improvements.

REPORT

Rail transport (passenger and freight) from GTHA to Niagara is presently serviced by two major Rail lines:

- Canadian National Rail (CN Rail): The northern route which follows the CNR tracks from Hamilton to Niagara Falls, and
- Canadian Pacific Rail (CP Rail): The southern route which follows the CP tracks from Hamilton to Welland, then north to Niagara Falls and south-east to Fort Erie.

Evaluation of Alternative Rail Corridors (CN Rail vs. CP Rail lines)

The GO Rail Service Feasibility Study, conducted by Metrolinx in 2009, considered the two basic extensions, CN Rail and the CP Rail, for GO Rail Service through Niagara to connect Union Station and Niagara Falls.

An evaluation on the basis operational parameters, including track mileage, track speed, transit time, method of control, 2010 peak AM ridership and rail infrastructure, ranked the CN line superior in every category and, therefore, identified it as the preferred alternative.

Staff agrees with the study's preferred option of the CN Rail line based on its proximity to the major concentrations of population and employment within the Region, and operational challenges on the CP Rail Line identified in the study. However, from a planning perspective, a southern route would encourage growth in the southern municipalities of the Region as envisioned in the Niagara 2031 Growth Management strategy and the Niagara Economic Gateway and Zone Centre Strategy.

Therefore, staff recommends that Metrolinx be requested to explore the CP Rail Line as part of an additional expansion program in the future.
EA Extent (Connection to the United States)

The Environmental Assessment study area extends from Aldershot VIA station in Burlington to the Niagara Falls VIA Rail station, and primarily services the major population centers in the Region. While this extension services the near-term commuting needs, the current High Speed Rail initiative along the Empire Rail corridor (connecting Buffalo to New York) complements the extension of GO Rail service to Fort Erie with an added link to the United Stations. The Empire corridor improvements are being carried out under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, 2009 (US Stimulus Funded project).

On November 24, 2009, the Town of Fort Erie passed a resolution supporting the service expansion, with a request that the Town be included in the study area. The Town's resolution noted that both Fort Erie and Niagara Falls are included in the Gateway Economic Zone and the Gateway strategy addresses improving linkages to the Canada/United States border. This resolution was also supported by the City of Welland at its December 15, 2009 Council session.

Therefore, staff recommends that the Region, in support of Fort Erie's resolution, request Metrolinx to investigate extending the GO Rail service to Fort Erie and explore connection to the US – Empire High Speed Rail Corridor.

Station Locations and Layover Sites

The proposed rail service expansion envisages eight GO trains (four rush hour each way) in addition to the existing eight-train VIA/AMTRAK rail service linking the Aldershot to the Niagara Falls VIA rail stations. For evaluation of alternative station sites, four sites were considered in Hamilton and seven in Niagara Region, along with layover sites (three in Hamilton and four in Niagara), as shown in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternative Station Sites</th>
<th>Alternative Layover Sites</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hamilton</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- James Street North, Hamilton</td>
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<td>- Centennial Parkway, Hamilton</td>
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<td>- Fruitland Road, Stoney Creek</td>
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<td>- Fifty Road, Stoney Creek</td>
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<td><strong>Niagara Region</strong></td>
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<td>- Casablanca Boulevard, Grimsby</td>
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<td>- VIA station, Grimsby</td>
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<td>- Bartlett Avenue, Grimsby</td>
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<td>- Ontario Street, Lincoln (Beamsville)</td>
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<td>- Victoria Avenue, Lincoln (Vineland)</td>
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<td>- VIA station, St. Catharines</td>
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<td>- VIA station, Niagara Falls</td>
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<td>- First Street, St. Catharines</td>
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<td>- Vansickle Road, St. Catharines</td>
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<td>- Glendale Avenue, St. Catharines</td>
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<td>- Via station, Niagara Falls</td>
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</table>
Various service implementation options were identified to be phased-in depending on ridership and funding. Of the seven station sites selected initially for Niagara, four preferred sites were identified based on evaluation of their natural, social/cultural environment, financial and technical merits. The four preferred sites are:

- Casablanca Boulevard in Grimsby
- Ontario Street in Beamsville
- VIA Rail Station in St. Catharines, and
- VIA Rail Station in Niagara Falls

The evaluation of the alternative sites in Niagara, as presented at the second Public Information Center(s) in May 2010, is attached as Appendix II. Regional staff provided comments on each station and layover site related to planning and transportation issues.

Staff agrees with the preferred alternative station locations as these sites meet the intended objectives of the Niagara 2031 Growth Management Strategy and the Region’s Transportation Strategy. With respect to the station at Casablanca Boulevard, staff notes that the location is outside the Urban Area Boundary (UAB) and a more central urban location would have been preferable.

Nevertheless, the Regional Policy Plan allows this use outside the UAB as a permitted exception in the Agricultural Area. This exception recognizes the station as a component of a linear transportation facility that cannot locate outside the Agricultural Area. Additionally, there are no undeveloped sites large enough near the Grimsby downtown that are accessible to the existing GO Bus service at the Casablanca location. Staff supports the station locations as selected above and recommends that they be endorsed by Regional Council.

Of the four layover sites in Niagara, the following two sites were selected, based on the evaluation methodology shown in Appendix III:

- Glendale Avenue in St. Catharines
- VIA Station in Niagara Falls

Staff agrees with the preferred alternative layover sites and recommends that Council endorse the layover sites as selected.

**Service Implementation Options**

GO has considered a number of service implementation options for a phased in implementation, as shown in Appendix IV. With reference to Niagara, 3 stations (Casablanca Boulevard, St. Catharines VIA Rail station, and Niagara Falls VIA Rail
station) are the recommended GO stations. Ontario Street in Beamsville will be a potential future station as ridership warrants. GO train services will first be extended to Casablanca Boulevard with buses carrying passengers to the VIA Rail stations in St. Catharines and Niagara Falls. Progressively, buses will be replaced by an uninterrupted, continuous train service. The expansion of GO Rail service to Niagara Falls may be dependent on the construction of a grade separation on the Welland Canal.

Niagara Falls VIA station also remains a recommended layover site, along with Glendale Avenue in St. Catharines as a layover facility only.

Staff agrees with the concept of phasing as part of the proposed expansion program. However, staff supports an earlier Rail service expansion to Niagara Falls that would not be conditional upon a Welland Canal grade separation. Recognizing that trains are commuter oriented and cross during peak periods only, staff believe that through cooperative discussions with the Seaway Corporation trains could be accorded a higher priority. The City of Niagara Falls passed a resolution to this effect on February 22, 2010, seeking recognition of its VIA Rail station as the logical terminus for weekday commuter train services. Staff believes that such a seamless rail connection to Niagara Falls would greatly enhance tourist and commuter traffic.

Staff recommends that Council pass a resolution requesting Metrolinx to explore co-ordination with the Seaway Corporation to allow train crossings over the Welland Canal on a priority basis, thereby allowing the GO Trains to terminate at the Niagara Falls VIA station.

GO intends to commence service to the James Street North Station in the City of Hamilton in co-ordination with the 2015 Pan Am Games. Both St. Catharines and Niagara Falls have existing VIA stations, which will also serve as GO rail stations in Niagara. It is appropriate for Regional Council to pass a resolution requesting that GO rail service be implemented to St. Catharines and Niagara Falls at the same time as service is implemented to James Street North. This would be consistent with the Region's transit vision, constitute an early success in implementing GO rail service, and make use of existing station infrastructure.

Regional staff will need to be engaged in a co-ordination role, as the detailed designs for the station, layover sites, and service implementation options unfold. Therefore, staff recommends that Council pass a resolution requesting Metrolinx to engage Regional staff at the earliest opportunity for co-ordination and support.
Submitted by:

Kenneth J. Brothers, P.Eng.
Commissioner of Public Works

Approved by:

Mike Trojan
Chief Administrative Officer

Patrick Robson
Commissioner of Integrated Community Planning

Appendix I – Service Concepts
Appendix II – Alternative Stations Sites (Niagara)
Appendix III – Alternative Layover Sites (Niagara)
Appendix IV – Potential Service Implementation Options

This report was prepared by Kumar Ranjan, P.Eng, Transportation Engineer, Transportation Systems Division with inputs from Mary Lou Tanner, MCIP, RPP, Manager Development Services Division, and Rich Miller, MCIP, RPP, Planner, Integrated Community Planning Department, and reviewed by Eric Flora, P.Eng, CET., Associate Director Transportation Systems, and by Joe Cousins, CET, CRS, Director Transportation Services Division.
Appendix II

Evaluation of Alternative Station Sites
Beamsville to Niagara Falls

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Beamsville Ontario St.</th>
<th>Vineland Victoria Ave.</th>
<th>St. Catharines VIA</th>
<th>Niagara Falls VIA</th>
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**Summary**
- Potential for indirect aquatic habitat.
- Compatible with surrounding land use and planning policy.
- Some archaeological site potential.
- Currently not serviced by local transit systems.
- Geographically located between other recommended station sites.
- Good potential for ridership from outlying southern peninsula market areas.
- Potential for direct aquatic habitat.
- Not compatible with surrounding land use and planning policy due to location within orchard.
- Some archaeological site potential.
- Currently not serviced by local transit systems.
- Good potential for on-street parking.
- Site located outside larger ridership market area.
- Negligible impacts to natural environment.
- Compatible with surrounding land use and planning policy.
- Good potential for local transit integration.
- Good potential for on-street parking.
- Site located within St. Catharines ridership market area.
- Negligible impacts to natural environment.
- Compatible with surrounding land use and planning policy.
- Good potential for local transit integration.
- Good potential for on-street parking.
- Site located within Niagara Falls ridership market area.

**Recommenation**
- Recommended as a potential station site.
- Not recommended.
- Recommended as a potential station site.
- Recommended as a potential station site.

Source – R J Burnside, Consultants – GO Transit Niagara Rail Expansion
## Appendix II

### Evaluation of Alternative Station Sites

**Grimsby**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Grimsby Casablanca Blvd.</th>
<th>Grimsby VIA</th>
<th>Grimsby Bartlett Ave.</th>
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**Summary**

- **Grimsby Casablanca Blvd.**
  - Negligible impacts to natural environment.
  - Compatible with surrounding land use and planning policy.
  - Close to GO Park & Ride facility (South Service Rd. at Casablanca Blvd.)
  - Good potential for on-site parking.
  - Within Grimsby ridership market area.

- **Grimsby VIA**
  - Potential for indirect aquatic habitat.
  - Compatible with surrounding land use and planning policy.
  - Currently not serviced by local transit systems.
  - Minimal potential for on-site parking.
  - Site is within Grimsby ridership market area.
  - Good connection to regional transportation (bus and VIA rail).

- **Grimsby Bartlett Ave.**
  - Potential for indirect aquatic habitat.
  - Compatible with surrounding land use and planning policy.
  - Currently not serviced by local transit systems.
  - Minimal potential for parking on-site.
  - Within Grimsby ridership market area.

**Recommendation**

- Grimsby Casablanca Blvd.: Recommended as a potential station site.
- Grimsby VIA: Not recommended.
- Grimsby Bartlett Ave.: Not recommended.

Source – R J Burnside, Consultants – GO Transit Niagara Rail Expansion
## Appendix III

### Evaluation of Alternative Train Layover Sites

St. Catharines to Niagara Falls

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**Summary**
- Minimal impacts to natural environment.
- Compatible with surrounding land use and planning policy.
- Some archaeological site potential.
- Can accommodate short-term and long-term train servicing needs.
- Less efficient than Niagara Falls location in terms of train operations, however within relatively close distance to expansion area terminals.
- Minimal impacts to natural environment.
- Compatible with surrounding land use and planning policy.
- Can accommodate short-term and long-term train servicing needs.
- Less efficient than Niagara Falls location in terms of train operations, however within close distance to expansion area terminals.

**Recommendation**
- Not recommended.
- Not recommended.
- Recommended as a potential train layover site.
- Recommended as a potential train layover site.

Source – R J Burnside, Consultants – GO Transit Niagara Rail Expansion
Appendix IV

Potential Service Implementation Options

GO Transit will consider several service implementation options for this rail expansion. Each of which, will likely follow a phased in approach. What and when things get built, will depend on funding and ridership demand.

Option 1
Aldershot → James St. N → Lews Rd.

Option 2

Option 3
Aldershot → James St. N → Casablanca Blvd. → Fifty Rd. → Beamsville

Option 4
Aldershot → James St. N → Casablanca Blvd. → Fifty Rd. → Beamsville to Niagara Falls VIA

Legend
1. Existing GO Station
2. Recommended GO Station
3. Recommended Train Layover Facility
4. Recommended GO Station / Train Layover Facility
5. Potential GO Station as ridership warrants

GO Trac / GO Bus connections

*For options 1-3, GO Bus service would provide a connection from the last station on the line to Niagara Falls, making stops in between.

Source – R J Burnside, Consultants – GO Transit Niagara Rail Expansion